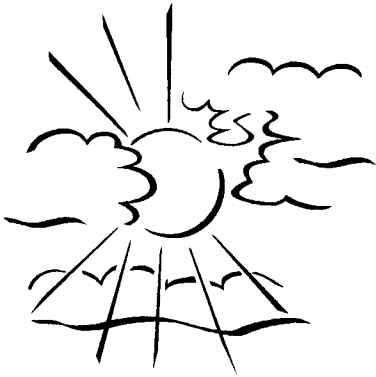


***Department  
of  
Human  
Services***

Prepared by the  
DHS Office of  
Communications  
(517) 373-7394



\*Important story at this spot

# **Articles in Today's Clips**

## **Tuesday, October 18, 2005**

(Be sure to maximize your screen to read your clips)

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TOPIC	PAGE
*Child Support	2-3
*Health Care	4-10
Child Abuse/Neglect/Protection	11-15
Juvenile Justice	16-17
Domestic Violence	18-19
Energy Assistance	20-26
Housing	27-28
Early Childhood Development	29-30
Vulnerable Adults	31-33
Poverty	34-37
*Weatherization	38-39

# Debit cards for child support to be tested

**Shiawassee one of first counties**

FLINT

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Tuesday, October 18, 2005

By Ken Palmer

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The state is about to roll out a new-fangled payment system designed to cut costs and get child support money to kids faster.

But for at least some parents who draw their support money from pre-paid debit accounts, the convenience will come at a cost.

That's because the out-of state bank handling the new debit accounts will charge a \$1.50 fee each time recipients access their support money through an automatic teller machine.

And because the bank has no branch offices in Michigan, they could also be hit with a hefty surcharge tacked on by the ATM owner.

"The poorest people are going to be hurt the most (by the fee and surcharges)," said Jennie E. Barkey, who runs the Genesee County Friend of the Court office. "And I think that's deplorable." A law signed in January requires that virtually all custodial parents be paid through direct bank deposit or debit accounts by the end of next year. Shiawassee County is one of three slated for a test run beginning later this year.

The state will save money because it won't have to mail nearly as many child-support checks. And parents will get their money faster through a debit account, officials said.

"It's sort of a logical extension in the process of moving into the electronic world of child support," said Marilyn Stephen, who directs the State Office of Child Support.

With narrow exceptions, such as for those who are physically or mentally disabled, the cards will be mandatory for anyone who does not get their child support through direct bank deposit, Stephen said.

The cards will be marked "ReliaCard" and can be used at stores, restaurants and other businesses that accept Visa cards.

Clients can get cash from tellers at banks that process Visa accounts, but will have to pay a fee to withdraw money from an automated teller machine, Stephen said.

The cards will be issued by U.S. Bank, which charges \$1.50 per ATM withdrawal. In most cases, FOC customers also will be hit with an additional surcharge by the ATM owner.

It won't be easy to get around the surcharge because U.S. Bank, the institution used by the contractor hired to run the debit program, has no branches in Michigan.

U.S. Bank was picked to provide the debit card option in the state's contract with Tier Technology, the company hired to implement the electronic disbursement program. Child support officials said they had no input in the contract negotiations.

U.S. Bank already operates similar programs for eight other states.

Shiawassee County Friend of the Court Susan L. Thorman, who is president of the state Friend of the Court Association, said the debit card payment system is a step forward, overall.

"It's coming, and we might as well bite the apple and get it over with," Thorman said. "I think it will be good for our clients."

The state will continue to encourage customers to use direct deposit, Stephen said. About 30 percent of all child support recipients are paid through direct deposit, she said.

Shiawassee is considered a small to medium-sized county, with 5,000 cases and total child support collections of about \$10 million a year, Thorman said.

Not everybody will embrace the new payment system, local FOC officials say.

Some people don't qualify for bank accounts and will have no choice but to collect their support through a debit account, Thorman and Barkey noted.

Also, if they are not receiving child support checks through the mail, some recipients might not be motivated to keep their mailing address updated, they said. That means they could miss notices of hearings or arrest warrants or other important information, she said.

"(The debit cards) eliminate the headaches checks give you, like checks getting lost in the mail and checks getting stolen and forged," Barkey said. "That's good because it gets child support where it should be."

"But you'd be surprised by the number of people who do not want to do business this way. There are people who, unless they are given a check, don't think they are getting their money."

Debit cards will start going out to parents in the pilot counties in November, Stephen said.

# Trying to Get, and Keep, Care Under Medicaid

By RICHARD PÉREZ-PEÑA  
The New York Times

Published: October 18, 2005

Jennifer Garden has a tumor inside her head - this much she understands. It will not kill her, she knows, but it has the power to make her miserable and steal her sight.

Ms. Garden, 24, also has Medicaid - sometimes, anyway. And there is much about it that she has just never understood - the paperwork she gets in the mail, or why the system sometimes insures her and sometimes rejects her, or why she can see some doctors and not others.

In many ways, the tale of Ms. Garden's struggle to keep her tumor in check tells an intimate, often maddening story of New York's vast, generous, but disturbingly imperfect Medicaid program. It shows how people's grip on this lifeline is weakened by private turmoil and personal failings, and by the idiosyncrasies of a system that seems to offer great largess with one hand, and chip away at it with the other.

Over more than a year spent watching Ms. Garden tackle Medicaid's rules, documents, acronyms and programs within programs, it becomes clear how answers to even the most basic questions - such as when is she insured, and when not - elude her.

"I'm learning how it works, but each time I figure something out, it's after something goes really wrong," she says.

And so sometimes across her complicated life she has received great medical care, and sometimes none at all.

Sometimes she is to blame, sometimes others. It is an endless battle - with the program, her troubled home life, and her own inclination, when circumstances get tough, to let things slide. Nineteen can be an age of imagined invulnerability, when illness and health seem distant abstractions. Not for Ms. Garden.

At 19, she lived with constant worry, a fearful whisper in her mind that she needed to protect her health - if only she knew how.

Four years earlier, her doctor had diagnosed a benign tumor in her pituitary gland, at the base of her brain. Untreated, the tumor would grow and wreak havoc with her hormones. Eventually, it would press on her optic nerve and blind her.

Medication can usually keep such tumors in check, and it worked for Ms. Garden. But the day she turned 19, her mother's health insurance no longer covered her, and there her health troubles really began.

She visited a New York City welfare office to apply for Medicaid. But what she thought was a straightforward process turned into something out of an absurdist play.

She explained that she had no income, but the clerk insisted she needed proof. She could have satisfied the requirement with a written statement that she had no income, a fact she says that no one explained.

For most of the next four years, Ms. Garden went without insurance, doctors or medication, and the tumor grew unabated. Exhaustion and severe headaches became regular ordeals, and it grew hard to hold a job, or even search for one.

In that time, she says, she tried repeatedly to sign up for Medicaid. Once, for example, she was told that she was not poor enough to qualify because she lived with her boyfriend.

She may have been eligible on all of her first three attempts - it is impossible to say with certainty - but each time she was turned away without even filling out an application.

While working part-time at a Barnes & Noble bookstore, she recalls, she tried once more to apply, but her wages - less than \$10,000 a year - were too high for her to qualify.

Ms. Garden's inability to get health care just pushed her farther from the usual path to middle-class security - a track her life had never followed closely.

Her parents had split when she was young. Ms. Garden then grew up in a succession of overcrowded apartments with some of her 12 full, half- and step-siblings.

She attended three different high schools and, she says, "there was a year when I didn't really go to school." The tumor did not help - the first drug she took for it gave her violent nausea.

The jobs she found were short-lived and most did not provide insurance. Her approach to work, worsened by illness, mirrored her attitude toward school: lacking focus, confidence, family guidance, or sophistication about how the system works.

She kept trying to get Medicaid, but never pushed past the initial rejections, not realizing that she could appeal them. Nor did she think to seek help from the Morris Heights Health Center in the Bronx, where she had been a patient growing up. The staff there would have helped her deal with Medicaid and get medicine for her tumor.

By 2003, health maintenance organizations that participate in Medicaid had dispatched mobile homes, brightly painted with signs offering free health care, to poor neighborhoods around the city. That summer, Ms. Garden climbed into one on a Bronx boulevard, and an H.M.O. employee helped her apply for Medicaid.

Nothing happened; somehow the application was lost. She tried again in December. On her sixth attempt to get Medicaid, by her count, she succeeded, at last.

### **Insured, but Unaware**

Lying on an X-ray table in North Central Bronx Hospital, Ms. Garden is more worried about money than about her throbbing, broken toe. Her hospital bill for this frigid February day in 2004 is more than \$300.

"I don't have any money to pay for this," she says. "I don't have insurance."

Actually, she has insurance, but she does not know it. The bill should go to Medicaid, not to her. She has a letter from the state's Department of Health, saying that her Medicaid application was approved. But she does not understand that it means her insurance took effect on Feb. 1.

"I didn't get a Medicaid card yet," she says.

In fact, the state has no intention of sending a card. It assumes she still has the card from her first stint on Medicaid, when she was a little girl. But Ms. Garden does not realize that.

She is also awaiting a membership card from the H.M.O. that will administer her benefits. She does not realize that such cards take months to arrive.

By the time she pieces this puzzle together, months later, she figures it is too late to have Medicaid pay her hospital bill. In fact, it might not be, but she does not try.

She is eager to start treating her tumor, but before she can, she realizes that she is pregnant. She could hardly be more stunned - she has been told that her untreated tumor makes her infertile - and she blames her lack of insurance. If she had health care, she reasons, the tumor would be under control, she would have known that pregnancy was possible, and she would have used birth control.

"This just seems like something in a movie or something, like I'm watching it but it couldn't really be happening to me," she says.

She visits her ob-gyn, Dr. Nathan Mandelman at the Morris Heights clinic, who gives her another surprise. She must not take the antitumor drug, he says, because it would harm the fetus. After years of trying, she has health care and can attack her tumor at last, and the first word from a doctor is that she must not.

"I was thinking finally, I can get things back in control," she says somberly. "But it seems like it just gets more out of control."

Dr. Mandelman places his stethoscope against Ms. Garden's swelling belly, and knows immediately that something is amiss. On this routine checkup in July, the fetal heartbeat keeps slowing markedly, then accelerating again.

He says she must see a high-risk pregnancy specialist right away, and arranges a visit with nearby St. Barnabas Hospital. But at the hospital that afternoon, a clerk says she cannot be seen because the specialists there do not accept her Medicaid insurance.

Edging close to hysteria, tears striping her cheeks, Ms. Garden pleads with the woman across the counter. She explains for a second time, and a third, that she has Medicaid, this is urgent, and her doctor has sent her here.

### **Failed Communications**

"Please, at least let me talk to him, please," she says, to no avail.

Once again, Ms. Garden is tripped up by Medicaid's intricacies. The doctors here take Medicaid - but not the kind she has, information that was somehow missed in the call between Morris Heights and the hospital.

Like many specialists, these doctors take patients from just a few of the 20 H.M.O.'s that participate in Medicaid in the city. Ms. Garden's is not one of them.

Medicaid has a program just for pregnant women, one that is more generous in some ways and would let her see these doctors. In fact, Ms. Garden applied for it after learning she was pregnant - but here again, she has misunderstood the system.

Her application was void because she was already in Medicaid, and she did not explicitly request a transfer from her H.M.O.

A week after the St. Barnabas episode, she finally sees a specialist, at NewYork-Presbyterian/Columbia hospital, in Upper Manhattan. Doctors there say her baby is fine, after all, but the tumor makes hers a tricky pregnancy, so she keeps visiting the high-risk pregnancy clinic, on the 12th floor of the sprawling complex.

In the end, she gets solid care there in several fields. But her experience also shows that going to a prestigious teaching hospital does not mean being treated like more affluent patients.

Many established specialists in the city do not take Medicaid patients in their private practices. Instead, those patients, including Ms. Garden, are likely to go to "specialty clinics" at teaching hospitals, and be treated by less experienced residents and interns.

In her first five trips to the hospital, Ms. Garden sees five different doctors, waiting one to three hours each time for 5- to 10-minute examinations. She laments being unable to get to know, or really talk with, a doctor.

But what disturbs Ms. Garden most is a sense that the doctors contradict each other, and do not explain enough. One says she must see a neurologist, then another says no, an endocrinologist.

One doctor says she must have a Caesarean section - news that she worries about for weeks, until another doctor says otherwise.

She skips her appointment with a neurologist, despite knowing that there may be no time to reschedule before she delivers.

In her ninth month, a doctor says she cannot resume her tumor medication while breast-feeding.

"I can't understand why nobody told me that from the start," she fumes as she walks home.

Days later, an M.R.I. shows that the tumor has grown bigger than expected; doctors start saying "macroadenoma," not "microadenoma," and worry aloud about what harm it might have done already.

But Ms. Garden's mind is elsewhere. She knows she is having a girl, and muses about what the baby will look like. She decides to call her daughter Savannah, a name she has liked since it was the title of a 1990's television show.

After all the fears and false alarms, Savannah enters the world just fine: 8 pounds, 9 ounces, with wide brown eyes and a full head of dark, curly hair.

Ms. Garden knows that her sight is at risk. A doctor tests her for optic nerve damage and subtle vision loss. If drugs cannot shrink the tumor deep inside her head, she may need surgery to remove it.

But she does not keep the appointment to go back for her results. She and the doctor trade phone messages, then they both give up.

"If it was something important, they would find me," she says. Many months later, she still does not know what the test showed.

### **Putting Things Off**

In December, she receives letters warning that the anniversary of her Medicaid enrollment is approaching. She needs to fill out renewal forms, but she finds them confusing.

She will call her H.M.O., "and see what they tell me to do," she says. "They'll come to your house."

But, distracted by the demands of motherhood, she postpones that call - next week, she says, next week - until it is too late, and her insurance lapses.

She insists she is not worried, because a pharmacist's mistake has given her a year's supply of pills. In fact, with drugs fighting the tumor, she is a woman transformed, with more energy and a sunnier outlook.

But her life remains deeply unsettled. Lacking money, she and Savannah's father, Arnold Castillo, share an apartment with five other people, including Mr. Castillo's parents, in Washington Heights. For a while, Ms. Garden moves with Savannah to her mother's equally crowded apartment in the Bronx, but it has rats and peeling lead paint, so she moves back.

A month after losing Medicaid, Ms. Garden goes to Morris Heights to apply again, but she has forgotten the papers she needs to prove her identity and address. She promises to return the next morning, but a snowfall dissuades her, and the next day she has a cold. Another month passes before, amid searching for day care, job prospects and an apartment, she gets back into Medicaid.

Half a year later, all is well, but Savannah's year of Medicaid expires soon, and Ms. Garden says she is determined to keep up with the paperwork this time.

"I know it's important to have insurance," she says.

Keeping it, it seems, is destined to be a lifelong project.

# States Protest Contributions to Drug Plan

By ROBERT PEAR  
The New York Times

Published: October 18, 2005

WASHINGTON, Oct. 17 - The Bush administration notified states on Monday that they would have to pay billions of dollars to the federal government next year to help finance the new prescription drug benefit for people on Medicare.

Administration officials said the 2003 Medicare law required them to charge the states, in exchange for taking over the states' Medicaid drug costs. But state officials immediately took issue with the calculations, saying federal officials had overstated the amounts owed by some states.

The Congressional Budget Office estimates that the required state contributions, also known as clawback payments, will total \$6 billion in the current fiscal year and \$124 billion from 2006 to 2015.

Some states, including Texas, are openly resisting the requirement for such payments. But federal officials said that if states did not comply, the money could be deducted from federal payments to the states for other programs like Medicaid.

One purpose of the 2003 Medicare law was to relieve states of prescription drug costs for low-income Medicare recipients. But as states do the arithmetic, many have concluded that they will lose money because they must give back most of the savings.

In calculating the amounts owed by each state, the Bush administration used a complex formula that takes account of per capita drug costs for people entitled to both Medicaid and Medicare.

These figures vary greatly from state to state. The administration estimated that total drug costs in 2006 would be less than \$220 a month, on average, for each "dual eligible" beneficiary in some states, including Arizona, Arkansas, California, Michigan, Mississippi, New Mexico and South Carolina.

But it said that total per capita drug costs would exceed \$300 a month in other states, including Alaska, Connecticut, Florida, Idaho, New Jersey, Ohio and Pennsylvania.

The administration assumed that per capita drug spending would rise 35 percent from 2003 to 2006. But some states, like Michigan, said they had aggressively managed Medicaid drug costs, so their actual costs rose much less than the Bush administration had assumed.

In an interview, Paul Reinhart, the Medicaid director in Michigan, estimated that Medicaid drug costs would rise 15 percent, rather than 35 percent, in his state.



David Parrella, the Medicaid director in Connecticut, said: "There's room for disagreement with the calculations. We're not really happy, but we accept the number we've been given."

Mr. Parrella said his state had 68,000 people eligible for Medicaid and Medicare and would owe about \$10.6 million a month.

On Monday, the administration unveiled a new online tool to help Medicare beneficiaries choose a prescription plan from the dozens of plans available in each state.

But some of the information was not yet available from the "prescription drug plan finder" at the federal Web site, [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov).

The Bush administration said that another Web tool would help people find drug plans that covered the drugs they took. This tool is known as a "formulary finder." A formulary is a list of drugs covered by a particular insurance plan.

Consumer advocates who had tested the plan finder said it was not particularly easy to use.

"It's tough to use, even for advocates," said Gail E. Shearer, a policy specialist at Consumers Union.

After repeatedly urging people to review the available options, Dr. Mark B. McClellan, administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, said Monday, "It is not time to choose a plan yet."

Enrollment in the plans begins on Nov. 15. Coverage begins on Jan. 1.

Federal Medicare officials said the new benefit would be a boon to people who are 65 and older or disabled. The Medicare Web site promotes the value of the new coverage, saying: "It will pay for about half your drug costs. Almost 1 in 3 people will qualify for extra help paying for their drug costs. It protects you against ever having very high drug expenses."

But Nancy V. Atkins, the Medicaid director in West Virginia and the chairwoman of the National Association of State Medicaid Directors, said: "It's going to be extremely complex and difficult to help people figure out what's the best course for them. I consider myself pretty knowledgeable and well-educated, but the new choices are still confusing. People will have to muddle through."

In West Virginia, 21 companies will offer 52 free-standing prescription drug plans with different co-payments, deductibles and covered drugs.

After a two-week tour of her state, Senator Blanche Lincoln, Democrat of Arkansas, said Monday that she had found "overwhelming interest" in the drug benefit. "Seniors desperately want to understand it," Mrs. Lincoln said.

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## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

# Costs are locked in for first year of new Medicare plan

*This is part of a Free Press series answering questions from readers about the new Medicare Prescription Drug program. Questions and answers will be published Mondays through Fridays through Nov. 15, the first day to sign up for the program.*

Sharon Bidlofsky, 64, lives in West Bloomfield. Her husband, Herb, 66, receives Medicare. He has a heart condition for which he needs medication. He also has private insurance coverage. But they are interested in switching to a less-expensive plan under the new Medicare program.

**QUESTION: Are the deductibles locked in or can the insurer increase deductibles within the contract year?**

**ANSWER:** The costs are locked in for the first year. After that, a plan can change coverage, but it is required to notify you if a drug you are using is removed from the list of covered pharmaceuticals or if your out-of-pocket costs are increased. That notification

must be made 60 days before the change. The notice of the change gives you and your doctor time to change the medication or formally ask your insurer to make an exception.

Today's answer comes from experts at the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services, the federal agency that administers Medicare and Medicaid; the Medicare Rx Education Network in Washington, D.C., and the Michigan Medicare/Medicaid Assistance Program (MMAP).

**For information:** MMAP volunteer counselors are available at 800-803-7174 and can provide information about events where experts answer questions.

To compare plans online, go to [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov) or call 800-633-4227.

Submit questions at [aboutmedicare@freepress.com](mailto:aboutmedicare@freepress.com) or call 313-222-1824.

To see answers to questions already published, go to [www.freep.com](http://www.freep.com).

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# Girl, 3, dies after sickness

Tuesday, October 18, 2005

The Grand Rapids Press

JAMESTOWN TOWNSHIP -- Ottawa County sheriff's deputies today were investigating the death of a 3-year-old Jamestown Township girl who suffered from flu-like symptoms Monday night. The girl died early today at her home in the Country Hills Village mobile home park, off Riley Street east of 24th Avenue, Ottawa County sheriff's Lt. Mike Brookhouse said. Authorities did not release her name. Jamestown Township fire officials were called at 8 a.m. and said the child's mother reported she was up much of the night attending to the sick child.

# **Prosecutor: Monitor harassed students**

## **Former Lincoln High hall monitor's trial continues today**

Tuesday, October 18, 2005

BY LIZ COBBS

Ann Arbor News Staff Reporter

Testimony will continue today in the trial of a former Lincoln High School hall monitor on trial this week for allegedly making sexually inappropriate comments to female students and fondling a 15-year-old female student in 2004.

Andre Bond, 39, is charged with six counts of accosting a minor for immoral purposes. Each charge is punishable by up to four years in prison. Bond is also charged with one count of second-degree criminal sexual conduct, a felony carrying a maximum penalty of 15 years in prison and one misdemeanor count of fourth-degree criminal sexual conduct.

Bond's jury trial began Monday before Washtenaw County Circuit Court Judge Donald Shelton. After Washtenaw County Assistant Prosecutor Blaine Longworth made his opening statement, Bond's defense attorney, Francois Nabwangu, told Shelton that he reserved his right to make an opening statement.

Bond, who worked at the school from 2003 to November 2004, "abused his authority by sexually harassing female students," Longworth said in his opening statement.

Nabwangu contended at Bond's preliminary examination in February that the allegations against Bond may be the result of a vindictive teenager or intervention from the mother of one of the teenagers who had been suspended several times in 2004.

Nabwangu maintained that Bond played a role in some of the teenager's suspensions and attacked the credibility of that teenager when she testified at the preliminary examination.

Longworth told the jury in his opening statement that the mother of the female student, who was 15 years old at the time, removed her from the high school in the spring of 2004 and homeschooled her. The student returned to school in the fall of 2004, he said.

Longworth also told jurors he planned to call four female students, one of whom has already graduated, to testify about interactions with Bond.

Also on the witness list, Longworth said, is a staff member and Washtenaw County Sheriff's Deputy Jeffrey Gontarski, a police liaison at the school, who are expected to testify about Bond speaking to them about female students "in a sexually inappropriate way."

Longworth said Bond made comments of a sexual nature about the teenagers' anatomy. In one instance in 2004, Longworth claimed Bond escorted a 15-year-old student to an office where the two of them were alone and Bond fondled her and asked her to have sex with him. She pushed him away, Longworth said, and left the office.

Liz Cobbs can be reached at [lcobbs@annarbornews.com](mailto:lcobbs@annarbornews.com) or (734) 994-6810.

Tuesday, October 18, 2005

Battle Creek Enquirer

Your Opinions

## Take stand against sexual assault

On Tuesday, Oct. 11, Michael Amos entered a plea of guilty just before he was to stand trial on six counts of first degree criminal sexual conduct involving his 15-year-old daughter. Although apparently unrelated to the six CSC charges, police say he fathered TWO children by his daughter.

"Incest is more common than people believe," Prosecutor John Hallacy said. "It is routine for us." Hallacy said that after he tried an incest case last year, jurors were stunned. They didn't think this happened!!

Child rapists, child predators, molesters and sexual predators are in our newspapers, on our TVs, in our neighborhoods, schools, churches and in our *homes*. The statistics are alarming and epidemic in proportion.

So what could possibly be more frightening? How about a community that doesn't think it happens.

Calhoun County is fortunate to have an aggressive and enthusiastic prosecutor in John Hallacy. Mr. Hallacy and his staff passionately advocate for justice in cases of sexual assault, domestic violence and violence against women and children in all forms.

Our local paper reports these crimes, Hallacy is often quoted in his outrage, we see it on TV, but we still don't believe it, and as a community we are complacent at best.

What can you do?

Talk about it!

Volunteer at Sexual Assault Services (training is provided).

Volunteer at S.A.F.E. Place (training is provided).

Attend a trial and demand stiff sentences.

Believe the victims and children.

Join the Empowered Women's Coalition Court Watch or one of the task force operations related to sexual assault or domestic violence

*Stop* pretending it isn't happening!!

Please join the Empowered Women's Coalition as we demand an end to the sexual assault of our children, and hear our plea to the community to stand up and take back the night!

Lisa Robinson

Empowered Women's Coalition

Battle Creek

Tuesday, October 18, 2005

A Child is Waiting

## Two brothers need one caring family

By Rosemary Dorr / Special to The Detroit News

Hugging his foster mother, 2-year-old Kellyn whispers, "Yeah, I'm a good boy."

He's learning. He can count to 10, sing his ABCs (which he does with a giggle) and already can bounce a ball. Maybe he'll follow in the athletic footsteps of his big brother.

Alvin, 11, is "excellent in all sports," notes his foster mother of 1 1/2 years. "The coaches want him." For two years, Alvin was named MVP for basketball.

A fifth-grader and a safety in football, Alvin says, "School is better" this year. "Math's my favorite." He adds, "I want to be involved in sports, and I want to be adopted with my brother."

"Alvin is responsible and mature for his age," says his foster mother. "He does chores without being told. He makes friends easily. He's an ideal child." She smiles, "And he can cook."

Alvin grins, "I'm not grumpy."

Neither is Kellyn. "He's a good kid," his foster mother says. "He does have asthma and needs a daily breathing treatment. His speech is not real clear, and he's sort of introverted, but he runs, jumps on the trampoline. He's just starting to watch TV, especially the 'Barney' tapes. I think he'll be all right."

"I'm fine," Kellyn says.

Please consider adopting these brothers and talk with Barbara Shelton at Catholic Social Services of Wayne County, (313) 883-7684.

**Last column's child:** Johnathan, 12, enjoys playing sports and loves family life and attention. For information, call Linda Haist at Ennis Center for Children, (313) 342-2699, ext. 55.

*A child is waiting appears Tuesdays in Features.*

# A no-run playground

Monday, October 17, 2005

With hurricanes, alligators and now pythons plaguing South Floridians, we were stunned to learn what the Broward County Public Schools has declared a childhood hazard:

Running.

Let's qualify that. This isn't a no-run rule for hallways, classrooms, stairways and assembly halls. Most schools have such a rule.

No, the Broward County district has outlawed running on school playgrounds.

This is no small thing. Broward claims it is the nation's fifth largest school district in the country and boasts "we are transforming education one student at a time." We would amend to "one playground at a time."

Something so senseless and zealously over-protective could only come from one source -- litigation. The Sun-Sentinel in Fort Lauderdale reports that since 1999 Broward County schools have paid out more than \$560,000 to settle 189 claims for playground injuries. This, it turns out, sparked an ongoing crusade to purge every potential hazard from district playgrounds. School Board member Robin Bartleman told the Sun-Sentinel, "To say 'no running' on the playground seems crazy. But your feelings change when you're in a closed-door meeting with lawyers."

To connect this to the big picture, a 2003 Newsweek report on "Lawsuit Hell" reported there have been thousands of playground lawsuits. The litigation, and resulting pressures from insurers, led to an ongoing purge of any playground equipment that could lead to injuries. But, as the Newsweek writer pointed out, "The new, certifiably 'safe' playground equipment is so boring that kids look for dangerous ways to use it." That leads to "an obsessive search for absolute safety" and "such absurdities as bans ... even on running."

Welcome, then, to the ultimate, harebrained absurdity: A no-run playground, where childhood energies are throttled and, at the one place running should be allowed, it is banned.

Well, stay tuned for the next phase: A no-run, no-skip, no-jump municipal sidewalk. Just to protect the kids, you understand.

--The Jackson Citizen Patriot

# Boy who helped girlfriend miscarry agrees to cut ties

*October 18, 2005*

BY NATE TRELA  
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

Through almost a year's worth of investigations and court proceedings, a teenage girl from Armada Township sat in support of the Richmond Township boy who beat her with a 22-inch-long souvenir baseball bat as they tried to end her pregnancy.

But the Macomb County judge who gave the boy, now 17, probation for the assault told him Monday to cut off contact with the girl, also 17, or risk being incarcerated if allegations that he and his friends threatened the girl and her family prove true.

"The risk of you being locked up ... was far greater today than it was three or four weeks ago," Circuit Judge Matthew Switalski told the boy.

The judge said he would not hold a hearing on the allegations if the boy keeps his distance.

The allegations were contained in two petitions the girl's father filed Oct. 6 seeking personal protection orders for himself and the girl. The Free Press is not naming the teens because their case was handled as a juvenile case. The father is not being named to protect the girl's anonymity.

Before holding a hearing on whether to issue the PPOs, Switalski met with the boy and the girl's family in his chambers. The father offered to not pursue the orders if the boy would agree to not have any contact with his daughter outside of incidental contact at school.

Switalski called it "a very reasonable proposal."

The boy agreed to cut off contact.

The request for the PPOs is the latest twist in a bizarre case that began last year, when the teens decided the boy would beat the girl in the abdomen with a bat to end her pregnancy. The fetus was buried on the farm his family lived on and was discovered by investigators that fall.

The girl was never charged with a crime, but the boy was charged in January with assault of a pregnant individual resulting in miscarriage or stillbirth, a 15-year felony.

He pleaded no contest Aug. 31, and, on Sept. 29, Switalski placed him on probation and ordered him to perform 200 hours of community service.

The teens dated until the summer. The petitions for the PPOs accuse the boy of harassing the girl, her family and her new boyfriend.

The families of the girl and the boy declined to comment.

*Contact NATE TRELA at 586-469-8087 or [trela@freepress.com](mailto:trela@freepress.com).*



Ann Arbor News

Letters

October 18, 2005

## **Young robbery suspects' release is questionable**

I question the wisdom of Judge John B. Collins' judgment in allowing the three Pioneer High School students accused of robbing the local bank to be released on bond.

Yes, I'm sure that his knowledge of the case is indisputably more in depth than the average Ann Arbor citizen's, but his choosing to ignore the recommendations of the police involved is, in my judgment, reprehensible.

We expect due process to the letter of the law, but judgments like that can only give cause for the advancement of skepticism.

Richard A. Petit, Ann Arbor

# Suspect told to move before knife attack

Tuesday, October 18, 2005

By Theresa D. McClellan  
The Grand Rapids Press

GRAND RAPIDS -- The week before he was charged with attempted murder for an attack on his downstairs neighbor, and suspected of strangling to death the man's pregnant wife, 19-year-old Edwin Ladeo-Munoz was told he had to leave the apartment he rented above the victims.

"He was bothering them. He played the TV very high, so I told the guy upstairs he had to move," said his landlord, Rosa Moreta.

"I talked to him (last) Monday or Tuesday, and said, 'Edwin, you have to move. These people are working. I don't want problems' and he said 'OK,'" Moreta said.

On Monday, Ladeo-Munoz appeared before Grand Rapids District Judge Benjamin Logan and was arraigned for the Friday stabbing of Leoncio Garcia-Lopez. He is charged with assault with intent to murder and remains in the Kent County Jail.

Police also expect to seek a warrant against the suspect for the strangling death of Garcia-Lopez's wife, 27-year-old Sylvia Sanchez. The couple have a 9-month-old child, and Sanchez was six months pregnant.

Garcia-Lopez, 43, told police he arrived home from work Friday to 848 Baxter St. SE to find his wife dead and the suspect in their apartment.

Ladeo-Munoz allegedly pulled a knife on Garcia-Lopez, who fought back with a kitchen knife, sending both men to the hospital, police said.

Garcia-Lopez remains hospitalized.

Both the suspect and the victims lived in the apartment house for about a month. They did not know one another before moving in, the landlord said.

The landlord said she called Ladeo-Munoz's caseworker from Bethany Christian Services Refugee Outreach Center, hoping the caseworker could help her get the man to move out, but she did not hear back from the person.

"He (Ladeo-Munoz) was very young. Someone recommended him, so I rented the house," she said.

NEWS: Local/Regional

## **Man arrested for assaulting mother, police**

Petoskey News-Review

*Monday, October 17, 2005 12:32 PM EDT*

CHARLEVOIX - Police arrested a Charlevoix Township man early Saturday on charges that he assaulted his mother and a police officer.

Michael J. McCann, 26, is being held in the Charlevoix County Jail on a \$200,000 cash or surety bond pending his arraignment Tuesday on charges of aggravated domestic violence, second offense and resisting, obstructing or assaulting a police officer. Both charges are two-year felonies, but the maximum penalties could be doubled because of a habitual offender, third offense sentencing enhancement the Charlevoix County Prosecutor's office has attached to the charges.

Charlevoix County Sheriff George T. Lasater said deputies from his office were dispatched to a 9-1-1 hang-up at home on Cedar Street in the North Point subdivision shortly after 2 a.m. Saturday.

Lasater said when deputies arrived on the scene they encountered McCann in the front yard with blood on his hands and clothing.

Police said McCann was intoxicated and resisted and assaulted the deputy at the scene and then fled on foot. The deputy apprehended McCann following a several-block foot chase and another assault on the officer, police said. Authorities said the deputy had to spray McCann with mace several times to subdue him.

Lasater said after placing McCann into a patrol vehicle, the deputy entered the house to find McCann's 57-year-old mother, who had been "severely beaten."

The woman was transported to Charlevoix Area Hospital by ambulance where she was admitted for treatment for multiple injuries, police said. The deputy did not require medical attention.

Lasater noted that McCann has two prior convictions for domestic violence and had had been released from the Emmet County Jail just hours before Saturday's incident after serving a 45-day jail sentence for a domestic violence incident involving a different victim.

# Democrats unveil heating-aid plan

Tuesday, October 18, 2005

By Steven Harmon  
The Grand Rapids Press

GRAND RAPIDS -- The elderly and poor are facing a crisis that may not be as dramatic as a hurricane, but could be as devastating for some, said state Rep. Michael Sak, D-Grand Rapids. It will come in the form of heating bills, expected to skyrocket this winter, which could leave hundreds, if not thousands, of West Michigan residents vulnerable to deadly freezing temperatures, Sak said Monday.

"This winter will hit many of our families hard, and we must act to give them protection before it becomes extremely cold and the bills start arriving," Sak said.

Sak and state Sen. Mark Schauer, D-Battle Creek, unveiled legislation that would assist Michigan residents in keeping up with rising natural gas heating costs.

They announced the legislation at a news conference at Area Community Service Employment & Training Council in Grand Rapids, as part of a statewide push by Democrats to set the agenda on the issue.

They spoke of the need to pass the legislation quickly to get help to residents, and said they expect a bipartisan effort to do so. But the absence of Republicans at the news conference signaled that the two parties are not on the same page yet.

"What frustrates me is if they're really serious about doing what's right, why wouldn't they have worked in a bipartisan fashion?" said Rep. Jerry Kooiman, R-Grand Rapids, the House speaker pro tem.

Republicans are looking at ways to get energy assistance to the poor, Kooiman said.

"I've been talking with the chairman of the Department of Human Services budget to see if any welfare money can be put into the low income heating assistance program," Kooiman said.

"It'll depend on how much is available."

The Democratic plan would:

Ban utility companies from shutting off heat during the winter between Dec. 1, 2005 and March 31, 2006 to households earning up to \$38,700 for a family of four.

Allow the Michigan Public Service Commission to transfer \$5 million from research into a fund that would help lower-income people pay their heating bills.

Give residents a tax deduction if they winterize their homes and install energy-efficient appliances. Families making up to 300 percent of the federal poverty level -- or \$58,000 for a family of four -- could be eligible for 50 percent of expenses, up to \$2,500, in tax credits.

Expand the Home Heating Credit so people who earn 125 percent of the federal poverty limit (\$24,000 for a family of four) can qualify. The current threshold is 110 percent.

Seek extra Congressional funding for energy-assistance funds.

**MIRS**  
**October 17, 2005**

## **Dems: Keep Heat On**

House and Senate Democrats want legislation to make sure the needy don't lose their heat this winter. With natural gas prices predicted to increase by 46 percent in Michigan, this package would prevent any utility shut offs from Dec. 1 to March 31 and would affect seniors, military families, those receiving food stamps, and those with incomes under 200 percent of poverty.

House Minority Leader Dianne **BYRUM** (D-Onondaga) said this expansion of existing laws is needed to provide "a long-term plan to help families better cope with skyrocketing costs of heating homes."

Sen. Virg **BERNERO** (D-Lansing) also wants a state income tax form check off, if people winterize their homes to keep the heat they now have. The credit, if enacted, would rebate 50 percent of cost to winterize a home up to \$2,500.

The package also allows the Public Service Commission (MPSC) to shift \$5 million from research into a fund to help people pay heating bills. It sets up a database to coordinate volunteers willing to help with winterization efforts.

Lawmakers will obviously have to move quickly on the package as temperatures begin to dip. Byrum said that could easily be done with a supplemental budget or other contingency accounts now before the House.

The MPSC says the average natural gas heating bill this coming winter will jump 46 percent or \$59 a month on average. The average winter bill in 2005-06 is projected to be close to \$200 a month.

The Democrats call their program W.A.R.M. for winter assistance and relief for Michigan, and took this show on the road today. Democrats held press conferences in Washtenaw County with Rep. Chris **KOLB** (D-Ann Arbor), Pam **BYRNES** (D-Lyndon Twp.) and Kathy **ANGERER** (D-Dundee); Madison Heights with Sen. Gilda **JACOBS** (D-Huntington Woods), Rep. Paul **CONDINO** (D-Southfield), Rep. Aldo **VAGNOZZI** (D-Farmington Hills) and Rep. Marie **DONIGAN** (D-Royal Oak); and Port Huron with Rep. John **ESPINOZA** (D-Croswell).

An afternoon Detroit press conference was scheduled to include Reps. Bill **McCONICO** (D-Detroit), Morris **HOOD** (D-Detroit), Gabe **LELAND** (D-Detroit) and Marsha **CHEEKS** (D-Detroit), and Sen. Hansen **CLARKE** (D-Detroit) and Sen. Irma **CLARK-COLEMAN** (D-Detroit).

Sen. Deb **CHERRY** (D-Burton) was talking about it in her hometown and Sen. Mickey **SWITALSKI** (D-Roseville), Rep. Steve **BIEDA** (D-Warren), Rep. Lisa **WOJNO** (D-Warren), Rep. Fred **MILLER** (D-Mt. Clemens) and Rep. Frank **ACCAVITTI** (D-Eastpointe) were scheduled to talk in Mt. Clemens.

Meanwhile, Rep. James **MARLEAU** (R-Lake Orion) countered with his own proposal, a move that eliminates the 4-percent sales tax on residential heating fuels, which

would be a \$260 million blow to the state budget.

"It will cost the state government less than a half a percent of our budget to discount state residents 4 percent on their heating bill," Marleau said. "Government does not tax necessities like food and prescription drugs. Anyone who lives in Michigan during the winter knows — you can't live without heat."

#### UTILITIES

### Lawmakers push plan for more home heating aid

House Democrats in Lansing called Monday for increased state heating assistance to low-income families, in light of reports that natural gas costs will rise significantly this winter.

Their plan includes a ban on heat shutoffs to residences and tax breaks for those who winterize their homes, such as installing energy-efficient furnaces and windows.

The state already has rules to prevent utility companies from shutting off heat to low-income utility customers and instead allow them to defer payments. The Democrats' plan increases assistance.

House Republican spokesman Matthew Resch said the Democratic proposals would be considered, along with GOP plans to offer more home heating assistance this winter.

*By Chris Christoff*

# Alternative heating a hot topic

By Dale Killingbeck, Cadillac News

CADILLAC - The market for alternative heating sources is hot.

"I have never seen it like this," said Dave Nederhoed, co-owner of Positive Chimney and Fireplace in Cadillac. "People come in and they are almost panicked."

With projections floating around of 50 to 70 percent hikes in natural gas costs and 30 to 40 percent in propane, homeowners are scrambling for other alternatives.

Wood pellet stoves, corn stoves, wood stoves, outdoor wood burners and even coal stoves are becoming hot commodities in northern Michigan.

"We are pretty busy," Nederhoed said. "Pellet and corn (stoves) are just about out of stock for this year."

In Lake City, Outdoor Specialties owners Glen and Tammy Simpson find themselves busier than normal. The company markets Empyre Outdoor Wood Furnace.

"We believe it is due to the gas prices," Tammy Simpson said.

At Tractor Supply Co. in Haring Township, manager Bill Johnson said he also is selling a lot of stoves.

"The demand for wood pellets and wood pellet stoves this year is greater than the demand for wood stoves," he said. Johnson said his company expects to fill the orders coming in.

At Positive Chimney, Nederhoed said he is recommending shoppers consider a coal-burning stove.

"It's a great alternative," he said. "With coal you manually feed it but the burn time is 16 to 20 hours. It just goes longer without you doing anything."

Nederhoed said he purchases anthracite coal from a Pennsylvania company that he sells to customers.

"I've got 66 tons sitting on my lot. Last year we went through about double that," he said. "I didn't have any trouble getting it."

Nederhoed said the coal burns clean and there is no smoke coming out of the chimney. He estimates two tons of coal are needed to heat a 1,500-square-foot house. Current coal prices are just over \$250 per ton.

"It comes in 40-pound plastic bags and it's got handles on it so you just pick it up," he said. A



coal stove he markets costs about \$1,600.

Dave Martus and Lauren Bach of Irons were in the store last Thursday purchasing a wood stove. Their incentive to “buy now” was two-fold.

“We like the ambience of the fire,” Bach said.

“We're hoping to save on some of the propane,” Martus added.

Store manager Chris Richardson said he is out of corn stoves, selling his last one Thursday. He does not expect manufacturers will be able to deliver any more before the winter is well under way.

Richardson said corn is the least expensive of the fuels, but people need to consider storage issues and daily cleaning chores associated with the fuel.

Meanwhile, Simpson calls the outdoor furnaces she sells a good alternative for homeowners because the furnaces also heat the water supply. The furnaces can be used as a source for heat with in-floor heating, baseboard heating and can utilize an existing furnace's duct system through a heat exchanger.

“They adopt to just about anything,” Simpson said, adding burning the wood outdoors has definite benefits. “You get away from all the allergies of it, the dust, the spiders in the wood.”

The Empyre stoves come in two versions of stainless steel and one of mild steel. The stoves “burn anything you can get through the door,” Simpson said.

The type of steel in the stove is important.

“The mild steel will rust,” she said. “You have to keep the ashes cleaned out of it.”

Installation of an outdoor stove involves digging a trench for the two water lines that transport water between the stove and the heat exchanger and possibly pouring a cement pad. Installation of a stainless steel stove could cost about \$9,000.

Simpson said consumers should pay attention to the life of the stove.

“Read their warranties and buy their better grades of steel,” she said. “That's the most important thing.”

Nederhoed, whose business installs various indoor stoves and chimneys, said he has hired four two-man installation crews to meet demand. He said if consumers procrastinate and decide not to order a stove until December, the backlog at stove manufacturers could delay delivery until late winter.

One thing is certain.

“Business is good for us,” he said.

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Tuesday, October 18, 2005

Battle Creek Enquirer

## **Soaring energy rates require safeguards**

### EDITORIAL

Many Michigan families could find their budgets strained to the breaking point this winter as heating costs are projected to soar.

Last week, the Michigan Public Service Commission warned state residents that natural gas costs for home heating could go up an average 46 percent this year over the previous season. Hefty increases also are expected in the price of heating oil and propane.

Two unknown factors make the approaching winter especially frightening: How low will the temperature go, and how high will energy prices rise?

There are no answers to those questions at this point, so the best plan is to prepare for the worst. But that is not easy for people on low or fixed incomes. Chances are that they barely scraped by last winter, and are terrified at the thought that this year's heating bills could be much higher.

Both Republican and Democratic state lawmakers have announced plans to introduce legislation that would, among other things, ban shutoff of heating sources during winter months, increase assistance with heating payments, provide incentives to make homes more energy efficient and eliminate the sales tax on heating bills. Each of these ideas has merit, but they also have to be reconciled with other factors, such as the state's lack of funds and energy companies' own needs. It is imperative that a safety net be formed with the cooperation of government, utilities, regulators, charitable organizations and others so that families do not freeze this winter because they cannot afford to pay their utility bills. Banning utility shutoffs in the coldest of months certainly seems like a compassionate thing to do, but it's also important that such cases be limited to the most needy, and that others who can afford to pay their bills do not take advantage of the system.

Regulators have a duty to ensure that prices do not increase any more than is absolutely necessary. Gov. Jennifer Granholm has announced that she will not tolerate any unjustified price increases.

Government and private organizations must work to ensure that funds are available to help people pay their heating bills. Each year this is a challenge, with funds often depleted before the cold weather ends, but it will be more important than ever this year that people have somewhere to turn for assistance. State and federal governments, along with charitable organizations, need to provide as many resources as possible for heating aid. Last year, groups such as the United Way of Greater Battle Creek stepped forward to help supplement emergency heating assistance funds. We all need to be aware of the cold temperatures that loom this winter, and adjust our budgets accordingly. Then hope for a little luck: After all, weather forecasters are calling for a warmer than average winter. Now, if Mother Nature will only cooperate.

Originally published October 18, 2005

October 18, 2005

# Ex-housing director gets 3 years in jail

**He also was ordered to pay back \$1.3 million for the money he stole**

By IAN C. STOREY

Record-Eagle staff writer

MANISTEE - The former director of the Manistee Housing Commission will spend three years in prison and pay restitution after he skimmed over \$1 million in public funds meant to provide shelter to the city's poorest citizens.

U.S. District Court Judge Richard Alan Enslen sentenced Jerome "Jay" Wisniewski, 60, to prison Monday and ordered him to repay \$1.3 million he stole from public coffers.

Wisniewski pleaded guilty in June to embezzlement and money laundering.

In his plea, Wisniewski admitted he used the commission's checking account to pay for personal expenses and diverted rent payments to his bank account. Federal investigators said he stole about \$1.2 million from the housing commission.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Timothy VerHey said he believed Wisniewski's sentence was "just," considering the extent of the embezzlement.

"We are happy with the fairly lengthy prison term for an embezzlement case like this," he said.

"The most egregious thing was that this man showed up for work every day to supposedly help the poorest people in Manistee for housing and he just looted the place.

"He basically ran that office into the ground for personal greed," he said.

In January, Wisniewski signed a "consent to forfeit" document in federal court and agreed to give up two homes and a land contract - worth nearly \$1 million - that he admitted he purchased for himself with public funds.

Wisniewski also forfeited a 1989 Rolls Royce Silver Spur valued at over \$46,000 and a 1999 Porsche 911 valued at over \$31,000.

Wisniewski, who faced up to 10 years in prison, worked for 34 years at the housing commission before being fired as its director in September 2004.

After prison, Wisniewski will remain on federal parole for another three years of supervised release.

Defense attorney Charles Chamberlain Jr. filed a memorandum asking the court to sentence Wisniewski to no more than 36 months in prison - less than the recommended range of 41 to 51 months - based on his "effort at restitution and extent of it."

"He has rendered himself a pauper," wrote Chamberlain in the memo to Enslen.

"We are satisfied and think the judge did the just thing," Chamberlain said Monday.

"Jay is a good man and I know he did a bad thing and it would have been nice to be able to expect probation, but that was not in the cards, given the situation," he said.

Clinton McKinven-Copus, who became the city's new housing director March 1, said the commission -funded by federal money and rent it collects - has worked to bring the organization more in order with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development regulations.

"We have been righting the ship and getting it on a solid course," he said. "The current condition is that we are doing very, very well. We are meeting the needs of the community by providing sound, good, affordable housing."

# Embezzler gets 3-year term

Tuesday, October 18, 2005

The Grand Rapids Press

MANISTEE COUNTY -- The former head of the Manistee Housing Commission will spend three years in a federal prison after being sentenced Monday for embezzling \$1.3 million from the public agency.

Jerome "Jay" Wisniewski, 59, admitted taking the money by diverting rental income and using the cash for personal extravagances.

He must repay the commission the money he bilked and already has surrendered up to \$1 million in property.

The fraud was discovered while the commission, which has 218 subsidized housing units, was bouncing checks and Wisniewski asked an assistant to deposit \$160,000 from his personal account to a government account.

# Head Start has a new home

Published Monday, October 17, 2005 4:03:05 PM Central Time

By ANDY HILL

Ironwood Daily Globe Associate Editor

BESSEMER -- After a year of relative quiet, the halls of the former St. Sebastian School again ring with the sounds of little children.

Gogebic County Head Start has moved its operation to the Bessemer site, which it shares with the county's adult education and Even Start programs, according to director Jacalyn Delich.

St. Sebastian School closed over a year ago, when it was merged with the former Our Lady of Peace School to become All Saints Catholic School for the 2004-05 school year.

Head Start will celebrate its new quarters and the 40th anniversary of the program Tuesday with an open house from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Guided tours of the new facility will be provided, as well as birthday cake and fellowship. "Earlier this year, we began the process of consolidation of operations," said Delich. "Classrooms and offices formerly located at the Gogebic-Ontonagon Community Action Agency and the Roosevelt Plaza in Ironwood and Father Daniel Hall in Wakefield have been moved. Consolidation allows for continuity of all program efforts along with collaboration with the Even Start program, with which we share the building."

Delich said Head Start has been under the direction of the Gogebic-Ontonagon Community Action Agency for 39 years. The federally funded program continues to provide services to some 179 pregnant women, children from birth to age 5 and their families.

"In Ontonagon County, we operate sites in Ewen, at the Ewen-Trout Creek School, and in Ontonagon, at the Ontonagon Elementary School," Delich said.

"It's a real child-friendly center," said Roberta Jackson, Bessemer, who has been a teacher with the program for eight years and appreciates the new site. "Being as it was built as a school, it's really good for the children."

"We do have access to a nice gymnasium," Jackson added, "but at this point we're in the process of licensing the outdoor play area, which has all new equipment."

Donna Pikka, Wakefield, has been with Head Start 16 years, and works as an aide with the afternoon program. She has worked at both the Wakefield and Ironwood centers.

"It's taking us a while to get used to it, because it's bigger, but so far, so good," said Pikka. "There's just a lot more room with the gym, room for

them to run. In our classrooms, the doors close, so there aren't so many interruptions. There aren't people coming through.

"And the bathrooms are bigger. You can take more children than at our other place. It's a lot of fun here, and the kids seem to enjoy it."

Parents also see the benefit.

"My oldest one is handicapped, so getting him into the old building was very difficult, because he has trouble walking, so now this is great," said Sarah Minier, Ironwood, who has had a child at the earlier Head Start sites and has a younger child at the Bessemer site.

"He likes it. He thinks it's more like the regular school, the big boy school," Minier said of her newest Head Start student.

She also appreciates the non-school aspects of the program.

"It's not just like regular school," she said. "They do family things. If you have a family crisis, they'll help out. They have a family service worker."

"Head Start staff make home visits, especially to the homes of parents with newborns," said Delich.

In addition, Head Start has special initiatives for:

- Children with disabilities, with specially trained staff.

- Child health and development, to prevent illness and enhance a child's lifelong well-being.

- Medical and dental care.

- Prenatal care for pregnant women as well as training in the care of newborns, through Early Head Start.

- Nourishing meals. The agency promotes breast-feeding of infants, with special care to meet their nutritional needs.

- Mental health. "Staff work hard to promote the mental health of each child and family ... and have access to a mental health professional to help them identify children's mental health needs," said Delich.

- Family and community programs. Programs collaborate with community agencies and organizations to establish a network of support that families can draw on during and after Head Start.

Infants, toddlers and pregnant women receive specialized care in Early Head Start.

"Early Head Start staff have special training to enable them to create an environment where infants and toddlers can flourish and develop important skills, such as self-awareness, independence and self-expression."

*--The Head Start programs are located in the former St. Sebastian School, 304 E. Iron St., Bessemer.*

# Woman, 77, missing

Tuesday, October 18, 2005

The Grand Rapids Press

MANISTEE COUNTY -- Police were searching for a 77-year-old woman who was last seen near the driveway of an adult foster care home Monday morning. Wilma Elizabeth Fredrickson was reported missing to authorities at 1:17 p.m., four hours after she likely left the Harmony House in Kickson Township. Searchers from several agencies were looking for Fredrickson, who was last seen wearing a tan jacket, tan pants and white tennis shoes.

Published October 18, 2005

## Cuts end service for blind, disabled

By Bill Laitner  
Special to the State Journal

A service that about 2,000 Michigan residents use to listen to newspaper articles will end Nov. 30 because of a lack of money.

The Newslines for the Blind of Michigan serves mainly the sight-impaired, but many others too, some with arthritis or neurological problems, whose doctors certify they can't see or hold a newspaper.

Now, in the wake of government budget cuts and a shrinking pot of private donations, the free service that offers more than 200 newspapers to the people who are blind or have disabilities will end for want of \$40,000 in annual funding.

Doug Spade, a former state representative from Adrian, uses the service to hear articles from the Detroit Free Press spoken by computer over the phone. Spade, 54, has been blind since birth.

Spade said he hopes state lawmakers ride to the rescue, but isn't counting on it because "the state budget is so tight now," he said. "If people would just contribute, that would buy some time."

The service has scores of papers, including the Lansing State Journal, which send their contents free each day to the service.

State Rep. Chris Kolb, D-Ann Arbor, said he planned to introduce a bill in the house this year that would add no more than one cent to all phone bills to pay for the service.

Its funding has "bounced from grant to grant," and last year depended on donations, "so what we want is an established funding source," Kolb said.

The service is free, in part because many blind people have low incomes but also because, in 1931, Congress ordered that library services nationwide be offered free to blind people, said Sue Chinault of the Library of Michigan in Lansing.

The service originates in Baltimore at the headquarters of the National Federation of the Blind, the nonprofit group that helped develop the computerized-voice technology.

Each state pays the federation a fee, based on population, up to \$40,000 a year, said John Pare, director of sponsored technology programs at the federation. The money pays for computer equipment, a staff of eight and nationwide promotion.



## On Newslines

- To learn about Newsline for the Blind of Michigan, call (810) 233-4776.
- To donate to the service, send contributions to National Federation of the Blind in Michigan, 1212 N. Foster, Lansing, MI 48912 and mention the Newsline program.

Contact Bill Laitner of the Detroit Free Press at (248) 351-3297 or [laitner@freep.com](mailto:laitner@freep.com).

## **Many in Macomb nearing poverty**

### **Expert says 1 in 5 county residents struggles with bills**

*October 18, 2005*

BY DAN CORTEZ  
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

Whittney Atwood of Warren was in a financial pinch in June when her husband went on short-term disability from his job at a Detroit casino. While the income slowed, the bills didn't. Soon, the gas was being shut off and the electric bill came with the threat that the same would happen to the lights. The \$200 a week in disability pay wasn't enough for the couple and her 15-year-old son.

She turned to Macomb County's Community Services Agency, which paid \$140 of her \$200 electric bill and \$400 of a \$500 gas bill.

"We'd never used any kind of assistance," Atwood, who is now off assistance, said Monday. "We've always been very sufficient. I'm just your regular middle-class person trying to get on getting on."

She is among a growing number of people.

Macomb County commissioners heard an unnerving report Monday from Kurt Metzger of the United Way for Southeastern Michigan, who said one in five county residents is like Atwood and lives above the federal poverty level but sometimes doesn't have enough money to cover basic needs.

In the past three years, the number of Macomb County residents receiving financial assistance jumped 76% to about 52,000. And most of those who have their hands out aren't unemployed or living on the streets, according to Metzger.

"People have this idea of what poverty is," Metzger said. "Poverty exists everywhere, and we need to be addressing this."

In a 73-page report, Metzger cited 2004 U.S. census data that said federal guidelines determine that a family of four is living in poverty when the annual income is about \$19,000. But factoring in food, insurance, child care and mortgages, Metzger figures that a two-parent family with two children in Macomb County in 2003 needed an annual income of more than \$40,000 to cover all basic needs.

It's those families that are around \$40,000 and lower who Metzger said

are teetering on the edge of poverty, but aren't counted as impoverished. He said about 21% of the 820,000 county residents fall into or below this category of overlooked and impoverished families. More than half of the county's impoverished people reside in Warren, Sterling Heights and Clinton Township.

"This is an incredibly alarming report," Commissioner Paul Gielegghem, D-Clinton Township, said. "No community seems to be immune."

It will take only one event -- an injury or sickness that leads to missed work or a dramatic jump in gas bills like the one predicted for this winter -- that could trip up a family and land it in need of county assistance. Metzger, who recently joined the United Way as its research director after a stint at Wayne State University, warned that cold temperatures in the coming months will leave families reeling.

"People are going to have to choose between food and heat and paying bills," he said.

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# County leaders wrestle with poverty issues

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Community members gathered to discuss the issue of poverty in Kalamazoo County Monday night, offering up varying opinions and suggestions at Mount Zion Baptist Church in Kalamazoo.

According to Pat Winston, executive director of the Fair Housing Center of Southwest Michigan, concentration of poverty multiplies its effect on a community. Alleviating poverty will require a countywide approach, especially in the area of affordable housing, she said.

The forum was sponsored by the Poverty Reduction Initiative to get the community's input on how to address poverty in Kalamazoo County.

About 40 people attended the event.

Winston, a member of the Poverty Reduction Initiative's steering committee, said affordable housing needs to be made available in areas outside the city of Kalamazoo.

Other municipalities need to play a greater role in addressing poverty in Kalamazoo County, Winston said, adding that neighborhoods should have a mix of low-, moderate- and high-income people living next door to each other.

"People who are poor are just poor," Winston said. "They are not bad people."

Winston said she worries that the face of poverty for many people who have wealth is skewed into one of a human being who isn't responsible or who doesn't have value or worth.

"That is simply not true," Winston said.

Mattie Jordan-Woods, executive director of the Northside Association for Community Development, said she was glad to hear Winston's comments about the need for more affordable housing in areas outside of the city of Kalamazoo.

Jordan-Woods, who spoke during the forum, said after the event that affordable housing shouldn't consist of large low-income housing units. She said affordable single-family homes could be placed in various neighborhoods.

"Spread them out so you don't know the person is low-income," Jordan-Woods said.

During the forum, she said she would like to see the community push harder to help people who have felony records get employment.

Jordan-Woods suggested there should be a push to get a member of Congress to sponsor legislation making it illegal to discriminate in hiring people with felony records.

Chris Granaderos, director of food and nutrition for Senior Services, said assisting people in poverty should mean providing accessible and affordable transportation for all types of people.

"Many seniors are living in poverty," Granaderos said.

She said a lot of seniors want to stay in their current homes as they age but that transportation often is a deciding factor.

“They don't want to go in nursing homes,” Granaderos said.

Jeffrey Rush, a Portage resident who spoke at Monday's forum, said he hopes the community's interest in reducing poverty ends with substantive action and not simply talk.

He said he is frustrated with bickering that sometimes occurs between service agencies in the community and between different government entities.

“It makes me very angry that poverty is politically expedient because there is an election,” Rush said.



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### Governor declares October 30 Weatherization Day in Michigan; Oct. 19 event in Lansing will celebrate weatherization of 250,000 homes

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October 18, 2005

Governor Jennifer Granholm today declared **October 30 as Weatherization Day in Michigan**, a time for government and local community agencies to help low-income residents find ways to stay warm this winter.

"Weatherization Day is an opportunity to let families struggling with energy bills know that there are assistance programs available to them that result in reduced energy costs and safer homes," Granholm said. "These services help those families reduce energy consumption and meet the challenges of the cold weather season."

Michigan Department of Human Services (DHS) administers federal funds that reduce the energy burden on low-income families by installing cost-effective measures that increase a home's energy efficiency.

"Rising energy bills associated with the winter months affect all families in our community and the hardest hit are low-income families," said DHS director Marianne Udow. "Low-income households can pay as much as 40 percent of their income for energy compared to 6 percent for middle class households."

**A Weatherization Day event is scheduled Oct. 19 from 9 AM–3 PM at the state Capitol.** The event celebrates the weatherization of 250,000 low-income Michigan homes. The collaborative effort is led by Capital Area Community Services, DHS Bureau of Community Action and Economic Opportunity, and Michigan Community Action Agency Association (MCAAA). Peter Dreyfuss, director of the U.S. Department of Energy Midwest Regional Office, will attend and speak at the opening ceremony. He will recognize Michigan on its weatherization program and the completion of 250,000 weatherized low-income homes. Other invited speakers include state Sen. Mark Schauer of Battle Creek, Tom Mathieu, executive director of Michigan Community Action Agency Association, Lansing Mayor Tony Benavides and Marianne Udow. Displays on the Capitol lawn will include weatherization program information, a history of Michigan's program, demonstrations of weatherization program diagnostic equipment and onsite energy education sessions.

Michigan's weatherization providers are inviting state legislators and the general public to a guided tour of a weatherized home on Lapeer Street in Lansing that day. Shuttle transportation to the weatherization demonstration house from the Capitol will be available from 9:30 AM-2:30 PM.

(more)

"With higher natural gas prices this winter, weatherization is more important than ever," said Michigan Public Service Commission Chair J. Peter Lark. "I encourage Michigan residents to examine their homes closely to see where weatherization efforts could help reduce utility bills."

A network of 33 local agencies – primarily community action agencies – deliver services to more than 4,000 low-income households each year. Services typically average about \$2,500 per household and are available in every county statewide.

Since the inception of Michigan's Weatherization Assistance Program in 1976 more than 250,000 homes have been made more energy efficient. Local technicians use computerized energy audits and advanced diagnostics to determine the most cost-effective measures for each home and assess related health and safety conditions.

These households save an average of \$275 to \$324 on their annual heating bills after the weatherization work is completed. Weatherization services include installing insulation, sealing and balancing ducts, cleaning and repairing heating system, and minimizing heat loss through windows and doors, carbon monoxide monitoring, and education on basic energy conservation activities.

- For more information go to [www.michigan.gov/dhs-weatherization](http://www.michigan.gov/dhs-weatherization)
- To locate your weatherization operator near you go to <http://www.mcaaa.org/>